

House Republican Press Release

July 19, 2005

Press Office: 860-240-8700

Representative Frey: Crews Prepare For Route 7 Project



State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, today said the Phase 1 of the Route 7 widening/reconstruction project will be underway shortly. The project involves widening Route 7 from Route 35 in Ridgefield, northerly to the existing interchange at Wooster Heights Road in Danbury (at Interstate 84). The initiative will widen the two-lane roadway to four lanes and improve intersections at Starrs Plain Road, West Starrs Plain Road and Bennetts Farm Road.

In February, the State Department of Transportation (DOT) awarded Tilcon Inc., of New Britain, CT, a \$16 million contract to begin the project.

Tilcon has installed a trailer at the site and expects to begin road work on Route 7 in August, said Rep. Frey. The first change will be shifting two lanes of traffic to the east on existing pavement, allowing Tilcon to build temporary pavement on the west side of the road.

Phase one will comprise a 2.1-mile section, beginning in Ridgefield and is expected to be completed in September 2007. It will include widening from Route 35 to just north of the Indian Trading Post, including and installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Bennetts Farm Road. Rep. Frey said that as a result of his meetings with DOT, two lanes of traffic will be open at all times. The work has been scheduled so as not to impact traffic during morning and rush hour periods, nor will it take place between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. on the weekends.

The second phase of the project, which will comprise the remaining 1.5 miles, is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2008 and take two to three years to complete, with a \$20 million cost. The state will contribute \$29 million for the total cost of both phases, with the federal government paying the remaining \$7 million.

Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader, is largely credited with jump-starting the long-stalled project along. In April 2003, he held a 'summit' meeting in former Governor Rowland's office with senior members of his staff as well as appropriate employees of the Department of Environment Protection and the Department of Transportation. At this meeting, a month-by-month schedule of accountability was agreed to by all parties, a schedule that Rep. Frey has been closely monitoring.

"It has been a very long wait to see this project get underway," said Rep. Frey. "Essentially, the contract allows construction to take place 24 hours a day excluding peak am and pm commuting times. Whatever inconveniences are associated with the construction will be worth the end result. It will ultimately reduce traffic congestion and improve the quality of life for our community."